

MISTAKES CONCERNING GOD

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“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”
Psalm 50:21

GOD is here speaking to a bad man, who had been committing all sorts of evil deeds. Even while professing to declare God's statutes, he had been casting God's words behind him, he had been the accomplice of thieves, and had been uttering falsehood and slander, yet all the while God did not interfere with him, but allowed him to run on in his wicked way, and the man gathered from that noninterference that God did not mind what he was doing, and that, in fact, He was such an one as himself.

But if we begin to think in a right manner about God and ourselves, it will strike us at once that there must always have been an infinite disparity between the eternal God and the very noblest of His creatures. It is true that man was made in the image of God, and that when he was in his perfect state, he could have learned more from what he then was as to what God might be than he could learn from all the rest of creation. His moral qualities, before sin had tainted his nature, rendered him akin to the Most High. Yet even then, although man was in the image of God, it must have been a very tiny miniature of the Infinite One.

Manhood is not a mirror broad enough or long enough to reflect the majesty of the Eternal. We are like Him as a spark of fire is like the sun, or as a tiny raindrop may be like the sea, but the resemblance cannot go any farther than that, and perhaps not so far. We are but creatures of a day, and He is the Everlasting. Even if we had still remained as pure as the holy angels that adore the thrice-holy One, we must have felt ourselves to be less than nothing in His eyes.

But now that man has fallen from his first estate, how unlike God he is! Man fallen is only the image of God so far as a miniature dashed to pieces could be said to be a likeness at all. But there are touches of the divine about man even in his lost estate. Manhood is a palace, but it is like a palace after a siege, or a conflagration, or long decay, a ruin, like some ancient palace or temple that is now the haunt of serpents and owls, with just enough to show us what it once was, but much more to show us how changed it has become.

And if man fallen is unlike God, man further debased by gross sin becomes not merely unlike God, but the very opposite of God, so that you may sooner learn, from a man who has degraded himself by vice, what God is not than what God is, and it becomes a monstrous mistake, and far worse than a mistake, when such a man as that looks at himself and says, “God is like me.” “Thou thoughtest”—and it was a most blasphemous thought—“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

It is my sorrowful task to have to show you that this great sin is very common among three classes of persons. First, *it is very common for the ungodly to fall into this error*, secondly, *returning sinners often make the same mistake*, and thirdly, *even the children of God are not always free from this error*.

I. First then, IT IS A COMMON THING FOR THE UNGODLY TO FALL INTO THIS ERROR, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

God is very long-suffering to men, this is not the place of judgment. Sinners are not, as a general rule, punished here, their sentence is reserved until the day of judgment. Some people regard every accident as a judgment, but we do not agree with them at all, else should we have very frequently to

condemn the innocent. Our Lord has very expressly told us that those upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were not greater sinners than the rest of those who dwelt in Jerusalem at that time, and that the Galileans whom Pilate slew, and whose blood he mingled with their sacrifices, were no worse than the other Galileans who went up to the temple, and came away unharmed [See sermon #408, Accidents, not Punishments, a copy of which Dr. Livingstone carried during his African travels, and on which he wrote, "Very good—D. L."].

God does sometimes startle the world with His judgments, but not often. This is not the time of judgment, judgment is yet to come. The objective of God in thus keeping His sword sheathed when, oftentimes, we are inclined to think that it might fairly be drawn, and used, is to lead those who are thus spared to repentance and salvation. "I will spare them yet a little while longer," says the long-suffering Lord, and so the trees that only cumber the ground are not hewn down, and the inference that wicked men draw is not that God wishes them to repent, and turn to Him, but that He is like themselves.

Wicked men imagine that God is like themselves in the following ways. First, *in an insensibility to moral emotion*. They do not care whether a thing is right or wrong, to have done right gives them no joy, to have done wrong gives their hardened hearts no pain. Some of them can curse and blaspheme, the words that make a child of God shudder with horror seem to be their usual language.

In fact, you cannot now stand in our streets, where there are two or three working men, without hearing such filthy language, much of it utterly unmeaning, that you wonder how their companions can endure it, yet none of them seem to mind it, and they will commit deeds which it would be wrong for me to mention, but when they have committed them, they seem to forget all about them, and they suppose because God does not strike them dead, or punish them immediately for their transgressions, that He is just as impervious to moral emotion as they are—that He never grows angry at sin and that He takes no delight whatsoever in excellence.

How grossly do they mistake God in this supposition! He feels sin most sensitively. To Him, it is "exceedingly sinful." It touches the very apple of His eye, it grieves Him at the heart, it vexes His Holy Spirit, yet the ungodly think not so.

They also are *utterly careless about how they perform their own duties in relation to God*, and they suppose that God is equally careless as to the discharge of the office which He sustains. If these ungodly men were made judges, they would neither fear God nor regard man, and they suppose that God, the Judge of all, has no respect for His own moral government, no care for the vindication of His law, that He lets things go just as they please, and will not interfere with men, but will let them act as they like.

If they are servants, they are only eye-servants, and are not careful to do that which is right. If they are masters, they seek only to do the best they can for themselves. The mass of mankind seldom look round to see the general bearings of a question, they only inquire, "How will this affect me?" Each man joins that party in politics, or that particular club, or goes in for the defense of that particular Act of Parliament which he regards as most likely to advance his own interests.

As to the general equity of the whole concern, only a few eclectic spirits will be found who will consider that, and that God should always be a God of equity, that He should look into the motives of men's actions, and especially that He should punish every sinful action, and word, and thought, and act with the utmost scrupulousness as a Judge—all this ungodly men do not understand.

They think that God is as loose and lax as they are, that He plays battledore and shuttlecock with moralities, and will let men do just as they like, never calling them to account. At least they seem to think that if there should be any account to be rendered to God at the last, it will be a very small matter, which will soon be over, and that there is for them no everlasting punishment, no dreadful terrors of the wrath to come.

They think that God is altogether such an one as they are, and *they themselves are indifferent to the condition of others*. If they hear that a man has become a drunkard, it does not greatly concern them. If they hear that a man has been committing an act of uncleanness, very likely they make fun of it, but it never troubles them. If they were informed that hundreds had passed into hell within the last few days,

they would regard it as no matter of concern to them, and they suppose that God is just as indifferent as they are.

O sirs, why will you so defame your Maker as to think it possible that He can be like yourselves? God is concerned about the character of the poorest man and woman living on the face of the earth. The honesty of that poor work girl, or the chastity of that young man whose name will never be published before the world, is a matter of intense interest to Him. The right that is done, or the wrong that is perpetrated, in every place beneath the sun, is a matter of the deepest concern to Him, He knows it all, writes it all down in His book of remembrance, and feels glad or sad concerning it all.

He is not a God of stone or of wood, He is a God—I know not how to speak of Him with due honor, for He is altogether beyond the range of human imagination or description, but I know that He is a God of wondrous sensitiveness with regard to sin. He cannot bear even to look upon iniquity, His whole being loathes it. We know that He is not indifferent to sin because the inspired psalmist tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.”

Ungodly men also seem to imagine that God, like themselves, is *easily deceived by appearances*. They go to church or to chapel, and they seem to think that by doing so, they have wiped off all their old scores. What if they have broken God’s law in different ways for many years? Have they not been to hear a sermon? Have they not even been to a prayer meeting? Have they not repeated, night and morning, a prayer that their mother taught them when they were children? As for sin, they regard that as a small matter. When they are about to die, they can send for some good man to pray with them, and so everything can easily be made all right. That is their notion.

Ah, but God is not deceived by outward appearances, He looks at the heart and requires that there should be in the heart purity, a love to the right and a hatred to the wrong, and these things are never in the heart apart from the new birth which is always accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ.

We have known some go to the length of thinking, or pretending to think, that *God was an accomplice in their sins*. Because He sat still, and did not at once interfere and smite them, they have said, after the commission of a certain sinful action, that providence seemed to have put them in circumstances where it was necessary for them to do wrong. We have constantly heard men try to make excuse for their sins by reason of the peculiar position or the very remarkable circumstances in which they were placed.

Even a murderer has pleaded his necessities as a reason why he felt that he might burgle, and steal, and even kill to supply his needs. Men will actually say that God has put them where they cannot help doing wrong, and that “fate” decreed it, and God ordained it, and so they seek to shift the blame from themselves.

This is indeed thinking and saying that God is such an one as themselves, and it is the height of impudent blasphemy when a man reaches that point. O You pure and holy God who utterly abhors everything that is evil, how far has the sinner gone in sin when, instead of confessing his iniquity with shamefacedness and humiliation, he dares to speak as if You were as sinful as he is himself!

This condition of heart in which men think that God is like themselves, prevents their feeling any reverence for Him. Hence, many of them render to Him no kind of worship, set apart no day specially as His, and even ridicule the idea of there being any Lord’s day in the week, and they have a League of their own for the special purpose of desecrating the day that most of His people regard as His beyond all the other days of the week.

This takes away from them all desire to pray to God. They say, “If we pray to Him, what profit shall it be to us?” His inspired Word is to them no more than any other book, indeed they even venture to criticize it with a severity which they do not show towards the works of their own poets or historians. They utterly reject both God and His salvation.

This mistaken notion concerning God also keeps sinners from repentance. As long as a man thinks that God is as bad as he himself is, he will never repent of his sin. It is often the holiness of God that

breaks men down under a sense of their own guilt. This mistaken idea of the character of God also prevents the exercise of faith, for a man cannot have faith in one whose character he does not respect, and if I am wicked enough to drag God down to my level in my estimation of Him, of course I cannot trust Him, because I have enough sense left to enable me to feel that I could not trust Him if He is like myself. If He is indeed such as my depraved imagination pictures Him, faith in Him becomes an absurdity, and well may the man who thinks this of God say that it is not possible for him to believe in Him.

Of course he could not believe in such a god as he sets up in his own imagination, but O Thou ever-blessed JEHOVAH, when we know how holy, and pure, and good, and true, and perfect Thou art, and see how opposite to You we are in every respect, we do, like Job, abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes, but we find it easy to put our trust in You.

When Your blessed Spirit has opened our eyes to see You, how can we keep from trusting You? When we know You, we must rely upon You. When we see the beauties of everlasting love gleaming in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, every power of our being seems to say, "I must trust in Him, and rest in Him alone." May God bless these words to any ungodly ones who have been thinking that He is such an one as themselves!

II. Now secondly, I am going to speak of the same sin from another point of view, and to show you that RETURNING SINNERS OFTEN MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE CONCERNING GOD.

Numbers of persons are kept from peace of mind through mistaken ideas of God. They think that He is like themselves, and so they do not receive the Gospel. For instance, *it is not the easiest thing in the world to forgive those who have trespassed against us*. There are some people who find this duty to be one of the hardest that they have to perform. Consequently, when a man with such a disposition as that is conscious of having offended God, he thinks it is quite as hard for God to forgive him as it is for him to forgive his fellow man, and judging God by himself, he says, "Surely He cannot forgive me."

Looking at his innumerable provocations, thinking of the twenty, or perhaps forty, fifty, or sixty years or more in which he has hardened his heart against God, he says to himself, "I could not forgive a man who had held out so long against me, so how is it possible for God to forgive me?"

Well might the Lord answer him out of the excellent glory, "You think that I am such an one as thyself, but as high as the heavens are above the earth so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." I have never found a text which says, "Who is a *man* like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?" for that is not characteristic of man, but I do find this text, "Who is a *God* like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?"

Yes, the Lord loves to forgive, He delights to pardon. His justice has been fully vindicated by the death of His Son, the Substitute for sinners. That was necessary, for He could not tarnish His justice even for the sake of His mercy, but now that the righteous Judge sees that the foundations of His moral government will not be shaken by His forgiveness of repenting sinners, He can freely dispense the mercy in which He delights. His mercy endureth forever and whosoever confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy. It is not difficult for God to forgive though it may be difficult for us to do so.

The awakened sinner often imagines that *since he would not bestow favors upon the undeserving, therefore God will not*. He hears of the great blessings that are promised in the Word of God to those who believe in Jesus and he says, "This news is too good to be true." Contrasting his own deservings with the fullness of the divine promises, he says, "How can I believe this promise? That one surpasses all credence. How can I accept that other one as true?"

The best reply is that given by God in our text, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." What if the gift seems to be too great for you to receive? Is it also too great for God to give? What if it seems to be too lavish to be given by one man to another? It is not too lavish to be given by Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Like as a king gives—nay, like as a *God* gives, does He give unto you.

The greatness of the divine promises, instead of staggering our faith, ought to be the evidence of their truthfulness. Is it reasonable to suppose that God would promise to do only little things for those who trust Him? Oh, judge not so! He “doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.” His mercies are high as heaven, and wide as the East is from the West.

The convinced sinner is also often troubled with the thought that *God cannot mean what He says*. “What!” he asks, “can I be pardoned in a moment, be justified in a moment, be saved from hell and made an heir of heaven all in a moment?” He thinks it cannot really be so, and he thinks so because he often says what he does not mean, and he therefore thinks that God speaks in the same style. But sir, I pray you not to measure God’s corn by your bushel. If *you* play with words, JEHOVAH never does. Hath He spoken, and will He not do as He hath said? Hath He promised, and shall it not come to pass?

The sinner next thinks that *surely God cannot mean to give him all this mercy freely*. He says to himself, “If a man had offended me, I should expect him to make some reparation before I forgave him. I would look for something at his hands, and is God’s mercy to be given to the undeserving, and nothing to be asked of him before it is given? How can that be?” He thinks that God cannot mean it, and that the Scriptural declaration concerning the freeness of salvation cannot be meant to be taken literally as it stands.

When this invitation sounds in a man’s ears, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,” he says, “They are beautiful words, but they cannot apply to me, just as I am, without anything to recommend me.” So he practically thinks that God talks as he does himself, without meaning what He says. But verily it is not so, for every promise of God is true, and shall be fulfilled to the letter.

This poor convinced sinner next says, “*But surely, you do not mean to say that God will give me all this mercy now.*” Yes I do, for He says, “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Yet, because this sinner has himself been dilly-dallying, and procrastinating, and postponing, he thinks that God will act in the same manner and will say to him, “You must wait now, you have waited for your own pleasure, now you may wait for Mine.” But there is nothing in Scripture to warrant such an idea as this. It is only our trying to drag God down to the level of our narrowness and littleness that makes us think so.

It is immediate salvation, instantaneous pardon that God delights to give. He speaks and it is done, He commands and it stands fast. There stands the sinner in his rags, filthy from head to foot, degraded and debased, but the command comes from the excellent glory, “Take away his filthy garments from him,” and they are gone in a moment. “Wash him from his defilement,” and he is at once clean. “Array him in white garments,” and he is so arrayed. “Set a fair mitre upon his brow,” and the mitre is there. What the Lord does requires no time.

We need weeks, months, years, to do what we have so do, but when Christ had even to raise the dead, He did it in a moment. He simply said, “Lazarus, come forth,” and there was Lazarus. He touched the bier on which the dead young man lay, and the young man at once sat up and began to speak. He said to the little maiden, “Talitha cumi,” and she opened her eyes at once, and rose from her bed ready to eat the refreshment which the Savior commanded her parents to bring her. O poor sinners, I pray you do not doubt that the great mercy, the free mercy of Jesus Christ is to be given even now, if your hand is but stretched out to receive it!

I have known some get into their heads the notion that simply to trust in Christ cannot be the right thing for them to do. They say, “Surely, there is a great deal more to do besides that.” Yes, there is much more to do after you have believed, but the Gospel command says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” One says, “I will go home and pray,” another says, “I will read the Scriptures,” and there are some who, in their despair of finding peace, resolve to do nothing at all.

Some time ago, a young man, who had been greatly concerned about his soul, came to the conclusion that he must be lost, and he determined not to read the Bible, nor to attend a place of worship, for twelve months. But this very resolve made him still more wretched, and one day, a Christian woman, to whom he told his feelings, was much grieved at his decision, and she said to him, "What a pity it is that you cannot take Jesus Christ!" As he walked home, that remark stuck in his mind, "What a pity it is that you cannot *take Jesus Christ!*"

Is that all we have to do—to take Jesus Christ? Yes, that is all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," comprehends the whole case, and where faith is exercised by us, we are saved. But we think that there must be something behind the promise because we ourselves often keep something behind in our promises, so again the text is true, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," but it is not so.

If you come just as you are, with all your sin and hardness of heart, and just rest your guilty soul upon the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, resolved that, if you perish, you will perish trusting alone in Him, your heavenly Father will give you a kiss of acceptance, lift the burden from your weary shoulders, and send you home in peace. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," is no lie, no exaggeration, no straining of the truth, put it to the test, sinner. God help you so to do, and He shall have all the praise.

III. Before I close, I must have a few words with you who love the Lord, for **THERE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO MAKE THIS SAME MISTAKE.**

They begin thinking that God is such an one as themselves. Now I am going to find some of you out, I know where you are, for I have been that way myself, I am sorry to say.

Sometimes, *we are afraid that God will overlook us because we are so insignificant.* If we walk through a wood, possibly we say, "What a lonely place this is, there is nobody here!" Yet, just at our feet, perhaps, there are fifty thousand little ants. "Oh, but we do not reckon them!" Why not? They are living creatures, and God reckons them, and He takes care to supply their needs as well as the needs of the people in that great city over there.

And those birds in the trees, ay, and the tiny insects that hide under the bark, that those woodpeckers are seeking after, or those little midges that dance up and down in the air around you, God takes notice of them all, and provides for them all, even as He provides for you. You think, because *you* ignore the insects, that God also ignores them, but He does not.

If the Queen were to come down Newington Butts, it would soon be reported in all the papers, but if there is a poor beggar going past our gates just now, with no shoes or stockings on, that will not be noted in "The Times" tomorrow morning, but God takes notice of beggars as well as of queens. You do not know that poor man who is just going into the casual ward at the workhouse, he is of no consequence to you, is he? But he is of consequence to God, for there is not a human being who is beneath God's notice, nor an animal nor an insect.

If you take the tiniest insect in the world, and put it under a microscope and examine it carefully, you will see that there are upon it marks of divine skill and forethought, and if you are able to learn all about that little creature which will only live a single day, you will find that the arrangements concerning it are truly wonderful.

Yes, God thinks of little things, so you little one, may believe that God thinks of you, and whenever you harbor the notion that you are too poor and too obscure for God to care about you, say to yourself, "Ah, that is because I am thinking that God is like myself. I step on a beetle and think nothing of it, yet, though I might be far more insignificant in comparison with the great God than a beetle can be in comparison with me, God will not crush me. No, He loves me, and He is continually thinking of me."

We also are *apt to grow weary of the sad and the sorrowful.* "Oh!" says one, "I cannot bear to talk to Mr. So-and-so, he has such a gloomy countenance and he speaks in such dolorous tones." Another says, "Really, my poor sister quite wears me out. I used to nurse her with a great deal more pleasure than I do now, for I think she has less patience than she used to have." We get weary of those who cannot cheer

us, those whose lives are full of sadness, and then we think that God gets as weary of us, but He never does. No, O sad ones, the Lord comforts the mourners and cheers those that are cast down. You especially who are sad on account of sin may rest assured that your sadness and dependency will never weary your God, your friends may get tired of you but your God never will.

We also sometimes *forget our promises*. In the multiplicity of things that some of us have to do, it is possible that we occasionally fail to keep our promise, and we are very grieved when, quite unintentionally, it so happens. But God never forgets any one of His promises, so let no one of us ever say, "My God has forgotten me." It cannot be, there never was such a thing as a slip of memory with God. Every promise of His will be kept to the second when it comes due.

We also sometimes find ourselves *loath to give to those who ask of us*. After we have given to several, we feel that we really cannot give to everybody who asks us for help, but it is never so with God. If we have gone to Him a hundred times, let us be all the bolder to go to Him again, and if we know that He has been helping a thousand other poor saints like ourselves, or poor sinners either, let us go to Him again, and go right boldly, for His bounty of mercy is not exhausted, nor His store of grace diminished.

We know too, dear friends, that *we are often unwise*. What man is there on the face of the earth who does not make mistakes? The pope, who is called infallible, makes more mistakes than anyone else ever does. We all make mistakes, and therefore, we imagine that God does the same. When we get into a little trouble, we begin to suspect that there is some mistake in the arrangements of divine providence.

We do not say as much as that, we should be ashamed to say it, especially if anybody heard it, but that is what we think. It seems to us that God has brought us into a difficulty out of which it will not be possible for Him to extricate us. We do not say as much as that, except in our hearts, but beloved, when we even think anything like that, we are really imagining that God is such an one as ourselves.

We know also that we are sometimes *harsh in our judgments*, and that we expect more of people than we ought to, and do not make allowances for their infirmities, and we fancy that God is like we are. But to His dear children He is ever generous and kind, even as Jesus made allowance for His sleeping disciples when He said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

I think that we sometimes represent God as being even worse than we ourselves are. When I was ill, some little time ago, I found that I could not keep my thoughts fixed upon any subject as I wanted to do, when I tried to meditate upon holy themes, my mind rambled because the pain I was suffering quite distracted me. I said to a friend who came to visit me that I wished I could concentrate my thoughts, and that I felt as a Christian, I ought to do so.

He said, "Well now, if your boy was as ill as you are and he said to you, 'Father, I cannot think as much about you as I would like to do, my pain is so great,' you would say, 'My dear son, I do not expect you to do anything of the kind,' you would sit down by his bedside and try to comfort him, and you would tell him that while his poor body was so racked with pain, you would not be so unreasonable as to expect him to act in any other way."

I saw at once that my friend was right, and then he said to me, "Do you think that you are kinder to your son than God is to us?" If our notion of God is that He is harsher and sterner to us than we are to our children, it is a very erroneous notion. Some Christian people seem to be afraid to rejoice, yet we love to see our children full of joy, so we may be sure that our heavenly Father loves so see His children happy.

Further, we know that *we ourselves are weak*, and therefore we dream that God is also weak. When the furnace of affliction is very hot, and we feel that we cannot endure its heat, we foolishly think that God cannot uphold us under the fiery trial. If our labor is very hard, and we feel that we cannot accomplish it, we are very unwise to dream that God cannot give us all the strength we need for our task. How can we be so foolish as to estimate the omnipotence of JEHOVAH by our weakness, for I will not venture to call it strength?

We also know that *we constantly change*. We are as fickle as the weather—fair today and foul tomorrow, and therefore we fancy that God changes as often as we do. Some talk about His loving His children today and hating them tomorrow, but that is not true. Listen to these texts, “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Judge not the Lord then by your fickleness as if He were such an one as yourselves.

The mischief of this mistake on the part of Christians is that *we narrow the possibility of our attainments*. We think that we cannot overcome sin, we think that we cannot walk in the light as God is in the light, we think that we cannot enjoy abiding fellowship with our Lord, we think that we cannot be holy, and all this is because we only think of what *we* can do, not of what God can do for us and in us. Now, as far as the poles are asunder should be our estimate of ourselves and our estimate of God. Christ not only says to us, “Without me ye can do nothing,” but also, “All things are possible to him that believeth,” to him who thus links himself with the omnipotence of God.

And I believe, brethren, by thinking that God is like ourselves, *we also limit the probabilities of success in His work*. If we could have the management of the affairs of the kingdom of God upon the earth, and the power to convert a hundred thousand sinners tomorrow should be put into our hands, we should be wise if we asked God to take back that power, for I am quite certain that God will save a hundred thousand sinners in a day when things are ripe for it—ay, and He will save a nation in a day when the right time comes.

But if there were to be a thousand persons saved under one sermon, or three thousand, as on the day of Pentecost, in any place in London, there is not a church on the face of the earth that would believe in the reality of the work, and the result would be that those who were converted would not be added to the church as the three thousand were on the day of Pentecost.

Even professing Christians would say, “This is wildfire that will do more harm than good, we do not believe in it.” If they were told that one person, or perhaps two, had been saved, they might believe that—possibly not the two, though they might half believe in the one, but if there were three thousand who professed to be saved, they would say, “Oh, that could not be!” The reason for this unbelief is that members and ministers alike have the mistaken notion that God is such an one as we are. Many ministers feel very happy if they have a dozen conversions in a year, and some are quite content if there is one conversion in a dozen years.

A brother minister said to me, the other day, “We have had a baptism at our chapel this year, bless the Lord.” “Oh!” I said, “how many have you baptized?” “There were two,” he replied, “and one of them was my own son.” I said, “Yes, bless the Lord for those two, but what are we to say about those in your congregation who are not converted to God?”

When we judge the Lord by what we ourselves are, our belief is like that which prevented the Master from doing many mighty works in His own city of Nazareth. May the Lord be pleased to give us a far higher conception of what He really is, for that will enable us to do much more for Him. It is because of this mistaken notion of ours concerning God that we limit our desires, slacken our endeavors, and are satisfied to have everything on the pigmy scale when it might be gigantic. We are content with pence when we might have pounds of grace. We are satisfied with the very imperfect cultivation of a tiny plot of land when the broad acres of God’s bounty lie before us.

We win an inch or two of the enemy’s territory, and we throw up our caps, and cry, “What mighty conquerors we are!” while whole provinces lie unconquered, and whole nations remain ignorant of the Gospel. Then we keep on straitening ourselves more and more, contracting our conceptions and our ideas, the older we grow, till the zealous youth gets to be a “prudent” old man, whose “prudence” consists in chilling everybody he meets, carrying wet blankets to cover up everyone who has a little life in him, snuffing everybody’s candle, and generally managing to snuff all the candles out.

We must, most of us, be conscious of this chilling process, I seem to myself to be continually feeling it. I think I am not altogether destitute of earnestness even now, but I wish I could keep at blood heat always, for blood heat is the heat of health, the heat of true life. May God keep us up to that mark, and it will help to keep us so if we have true notions of what God can do, and will do, and forever give up thinking that He is such an one as ourselves. May God's blessing rest upon you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.